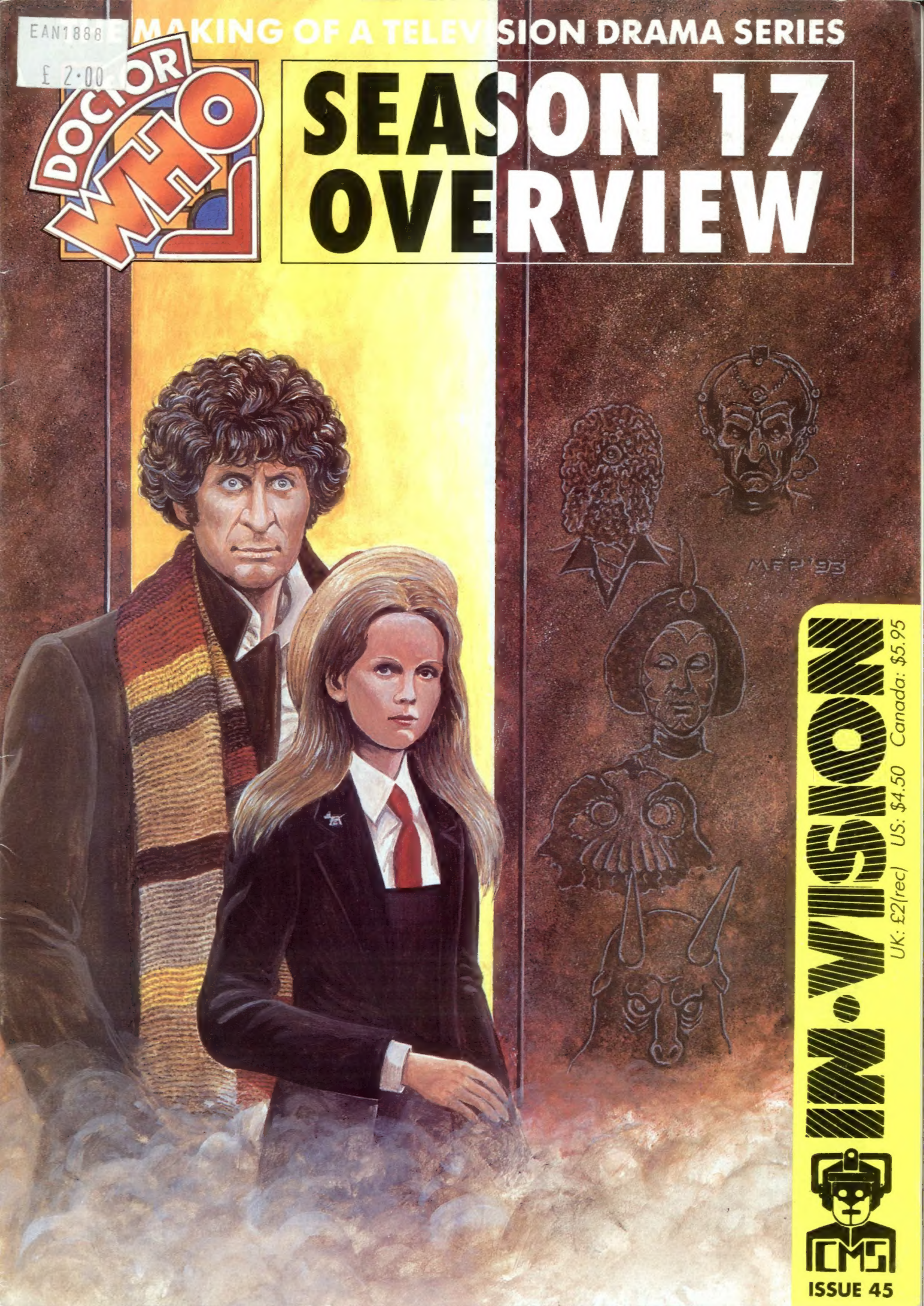
EAN1888
£2·00

MAKING OF A TELEVISION DRAMA SERIES

DOCTOR WHO

SEASON 17 OVERVIEW



TIME-VISION
UK: £2(rec) US: $4.50 Canada: $5.95
CMS
ISSUE 45

The Script Editor's Guide

WHEN HE took the job as *Doctor Who*'s script editor, Douglas Adams was amazed to find the programme did not possess a current Writer's Guide. So he set about writing one, giving it the title *The Script Editor's Guide to Dr Who Storylines*. Much of this document was subsequently re-written by Christopher Bidmead shortly after his appointment to succeed Adams, with further revised editions being compiled and issued throughout 1980 until his resignation in November.

Reprinted exclusively in this issue of IN•VISION is the main body of the November 1980 version which reflects the aims and ambitions both men held for attracting their vision of good Doctor Who material.

Interestingly, whenever copies of this guide were sent to prospective authors, Bidmead also enclosed photostats of the 1979 US Pinnacle Books *Introduction* to Doctor Who.

This introduction was written by another famous sf writer, Harlan Ellison. Bidmead felt that the two documents together gave a brief but detailed overview of the series' unique structure and house-style as well as his perception of where the series should go in the Eighties. □

Doctor Who - NOTES FOR NEW WRITERS

THE NATURE OF THE SHOW

What we're looking for from new writers are not complete scripts or even involved scenarios, but fresh and readably presented (i.e. brief...) storylines.

We're interested in plots that rise convincingly out of characterisation and well-thought-out situations; in particular, storylines should indicate how the idea fits into the four-episode shape in which we (usually) serialise our stories. An example, not intended to be definitive, might be: 1. Exposition, 2. Complications leading to crisis, 3. The real situation exposed, revealing the awful truth, 4. The DOCTOR battles against the odds but finally wins through.

This kind of thinking gives a rise and fall to the narrative, and should throw up strong cliff-hangers in which characters are forced to deal with changing situations, as opposed to the ad hoc "in one bound our hero is free" variety.

There is no **Doctor Who** formula, but experience shows that the format allows for three main kinds of story:

a. Space Fiction

Recently the programme has been developing a more solid science-fiction basis, and while we feel this is probably a welcome change we're anxious to avoid importing wholesale the familiar clichés of the genre. Of course it's impossible to avoid the sci-fi icons: exploding supernovae, menacing robots, and so forth, but they need to be as far as possible rethought into our unique context.

b. Earth-bound

The appeal of an Earth-bound story is that it gives both the team and the viewers an opportunity to get out on location for a breath of fresh air. But filming is very expensive, and night filming, immensely appealing though it is as a device to wind up the tension, is almost completely outside the scope of our budget. Writers should try to keep all filming to no more than fifteen minutes in a hundred minute story.

c. Historical

These are probably the most difficult to handle, and new writers are recommended to avoid the genre unless they are particularly sure of their ground. Many new writers seem drawn to kitsch-history themes (Dr Who meets Machiavelli), but the result is usually an unhappy potpourri of fact and fantasy.

It's a well-understood convention that our Time-travelling hero does not change history; additionally we tend to shy away from the sort of story that "reveals" that the truth about a particular historical event is different from what we always thought it to be. Thus, unless very carefully handled, a story based on the idea that the First World War was actually triggered off by refugees from a *coup d'état* on the planet Zorrella is not going to appeal to us.

Having said this, we are in the business of transmitting "science-fiction adventure stories", and this element must not be overlooked.

The adventures of a Time-travelling renegade Time Lord is of course built on a premise of wildest fantasy. But without inhibiting creative ideas, we'd prefer writers to work within this concept in a way that acknowledges the appropriate disciplines. Charged Particle Physics (to pick a topic at random) is mapped territory accessible to many of our viewers (there are Doctor Who Appreciation Societies in Universities all over the world): and writers who want to bring this topic into their story should at least glance at the relevant pages of the encyclopaedia. History of course deserves similar treatment. Imaginative extrapolation of "the facts" should be preferred to pure gobbledegook.

I should add that having the DOCTOR go back in time to do a fix that solves the problem by not allowing it to arise is a favourite storyline idea we've had to outlaw. If recursive solutions are allowable our audience will ask why the DOCTOR doesn't always do this, and there will never be any adventure.

The Doctor comes from the planet Gallifrey, in the constellation of Kasterborus. His relationship with his fellow Time Lords has been portrayed in contradictory ways during the programme's long history: but the original premise is worth bearing in mind. The Time Lords were aloof, super-creatures who watched the workings of the Universe objectively; build-

to the *Doctor Who* Galaxy

ing up their store of knowledge without interfering. One of their number, unable to remain detached, plunged himself into moral involvement by "borrowing" a TARDIS from the dry-dock where it was undergoing repairs. This fugitive was the DOCTOR. Subsequent adventures have had him revisiting Gallifrey and redeeming himself in the eyes of the Time Lords. There is, however, evidence that at least some of these stories may be forgeries!

Like all Time Lords the DOCTOR has two hearts and a normal body temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit. He is over seven centuries old, and has the capability of regenerating himself into different appearances - his present form being his fourth regeneration.

Incidentally, he is never referred to as "Doctor Who" either in speech headings or by other characters. His name is THE DOCTOR — "Who?" is the mystery! The fact that he is always "Doctor Who" for the purposes of the opening and closing titles is a historical quirk, reminding us that the format has been shaped more by collective intuition than by centralised logic.

The DOCTOR should not be seen as a sort of Superman. He is fallible and vulnerable and only too conscious that life consists largely of things going wrong for well-intentioned people like himself. Note too, that he is only rarely intentionally funny. If many of his responses and solutions make us laugh with their unexpected appropriateness it is because we lack his agility of mind and breadth of experience, and didn't see them coming.

The TARDIS, or Time and Relative Dimensions in Space, is the temperamental ship the DOCTOR uses in his travels. From the outside it looks like an old-fashioned Police Telephone box, a form it got stuck in during an early journey to Earth. It has one door, opened with a key which the DOCTOR keeps, and although the occasional exotic creature has managed to get in without the DOCTOR's prior consent, the machine is essentially secure from invaders.

Although the exterior exists in our physical world, the interior occupies a different dimension, existing outside Time. This supreme feat of temporal engineering mastered by the old Time Lords explains the paradox that the inside of the TARDIS is indefinitely large, while the outside is definitely somewhat on the small side.

The heart of the ship as it is currently configured is the TARDIS Console Room, which is actually the redesigned Secondary Control Room, the DOCTOR having got a little bored with the larger Primary Control Room.

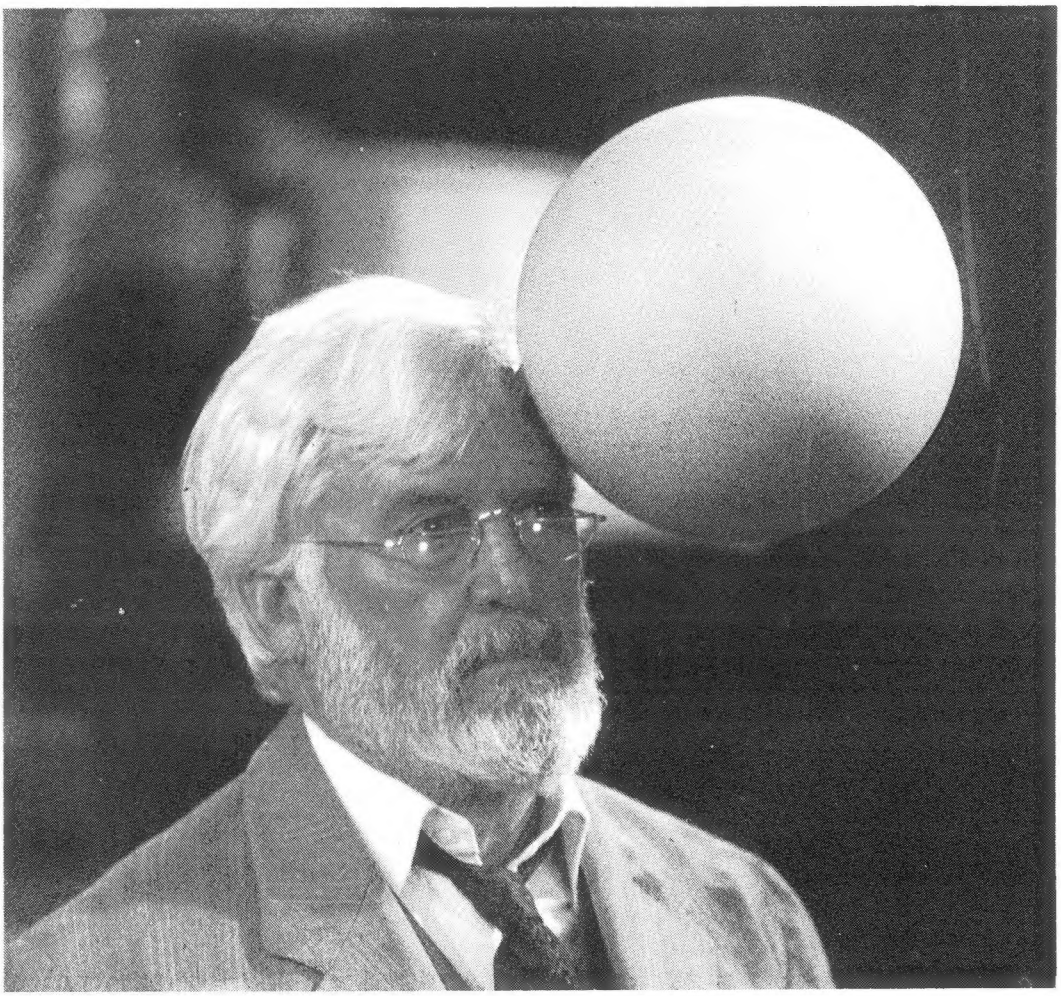
Here the DOCTOR steers the ship from the six-panelled console, in the middle of which is the oscillating glass column technically referred to as the Time Rotor. The power which fuels the TARDIS' journeys is held beneath the Time Rotor and, depending on the actions of the Rotor, the DOCTOR is able to obtain a full status report on what the ship is doing. If the Rotor is still and the lights are off, then the ship has materialised. If it is rising and falling and the light is on, then the TARDIS is in flight.

Mounted on the wall inside the TARDIS is the scanner-screen on which the TARDIS occupants can view (but not hear) the world outside. A panel closes over it when not in use.

Other areas of the TARDIS include the workshop, corridors, Cloister Room, bathroom, storage chambers, wardrobes and so on. It has also been established that these are subject to occasional reconfiguration by the TARDIS support systems!

When the TARDIS is in flight the light on top of the Police Box's exterior flashes and a whirring noise is heard. Once the materialisation is complete, the light and noise stops. This applies in reverse when the vehicle dematerialises.

The area between the Po-



The Script Editor's Guide to the *Doctor Who* Galaxy

lice Box doors and the interior doors of the TARDIS is a temporal void; an area never seen in our stories.

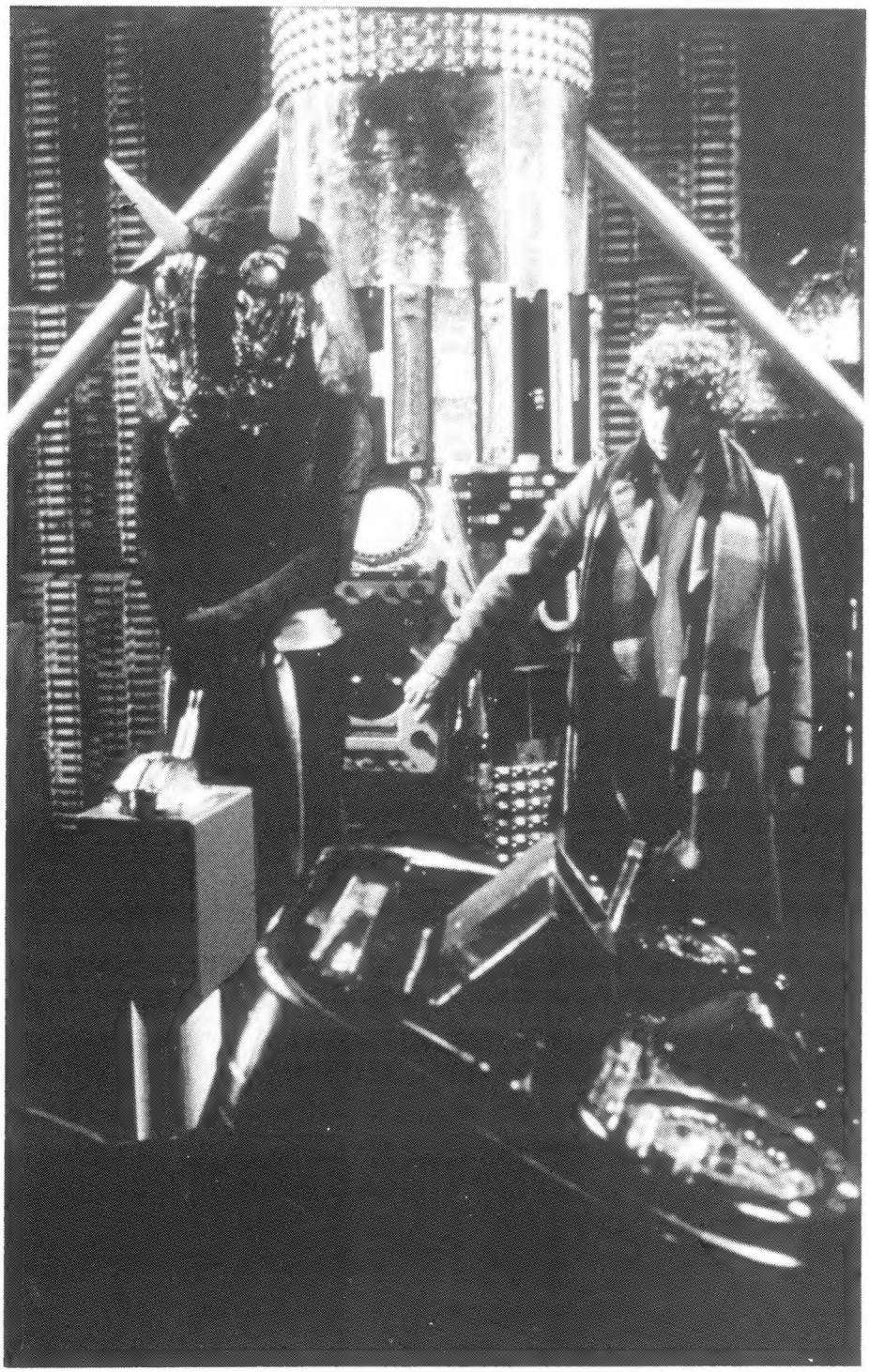
Don't bother to submit stories involving Daleks. Terry Nation invented the beasts, he owns the copyright, and quite properly reserves the right to write Dalek stories himself. In fact the copyright in all monsters and characters is owned by the writer who invented them. It is far better to invent your own.

A WORD ON PRESENTATION

Putting characters' names in CAPITALS makes it considerably easier for the reader to track back on plot. Double spacing with proper margins also improves readability. Four pages should be adequate to put across the essence of the idea you want to sell us. I've already suggested that storylines should show clearly how the material fits into the four-part format, but it is sometimes helpful to lead off with a short preface that sets out the premise on which the story is based.

BREVITY IS THE SOUL OF STORYLINES

We don't want to plough through twenty pages of closely-typed prose trying to work out what the story is about. At the initial stage of story ideas we just want to know what the idea is, how it resolves, and whether it promises sufficient area of conflict to sustain a hundred minutes of tension and drama. It is takes more than two or three pages then the idea has not been thought out well enough. There is absolutely no point in working out all the complicated details of the plot mechanics - who is running after whom at what time and with which monkey wrench - until the basic plot concepts have been properly hammered out.



A script writer is basically in the business of selling his ideas. Imagine the reaction of a harassed script editor faced on the one hand with a very lengthy and detailed exposition of a complicated plotline that he can't fully understand on one reading, and on the other hand with a short pithy idea that is irresistibly concise...

WHOSE STORY?

This point seems almost too obvious to mention, but it is surprising how often we get storylines which are quite clearly based on previous **Doctor Who** stories, or at least elements of them. Obviously it is terribly difficult to be thoroughly original after a hundred stories, but no-one ever said that writing **Doctor Who** isn't terribly difficult.

I am writing these notes on the assumption that most people who submit storylines are seriously interested in tackling the very tough professional job of writing for the programme.

Storylines you send in will be warmly welcomed and read. It is always helpful if the writer can include some brief details about his writing history and aspirations. Obviously previous television writing experience is a valuable asset, but we have in the past produced a number of scripts written by newcomers to the medium. A useful book to put you in the picture is *Writing for Television* by Malcolm Hulke (another former **Doctor Who** writer), published by A & C Black.

We will acknowledge all submissions as soon as we can - though experience shows that due to our heavy production schedule our replies are often far from instantaneous. How we proceed from there will obviously depend on the quality and suitability of the ideas submitted. □

Season 17 in context

Look Who's back!

THERE'S no prize for guessing who's set for another round of Galactic fisticuffs.

It's the indestructible Dr. Who, played by actor Tom Baker in the BBC TV show. But who's his friend? The doctor has a new assistant, Lalla Ward, who plays Romana in the series that begins tomorrow. For the first time in four years Dr. Who will be up against his old enemies, the Daleks.

Picture: RON BURTON

The girl who nearly gave it all up—Lalla Ward as Dr. Who's new assistant

Scare stories

MARTIN WIGGINS looks at the televison violence debate happening at the time of season 17

WHEN LORD WILLIS instigated a Parliamentary debate about the Annan report on the future of broadcasting in December 1977, the peers of the realm had much to say about violence on the small screen, but were surprisingly silent about **Doctor Who**. "Surprisingly", because the mid-1970s had been a period when the series had faced an unprecedented public assault for its violent and horrific content: from PLANET OF THE SPIDERS to THE TALONS OF WENG CHIANG there had been a barrage of public criticism spearheaded by Mary Whitehouse and her pressure group, the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association. Yet, less than a year after the transmission of the most recent offender among **Doctor Who** serials, their lordships evidently thought Tom and Jerry and Kermit the Frog (all criticised by speakers in the debate) to be more harmful influences.

The conventional historiography of **Doctor Who** offers a neat explanation for this sudden change of priorities, for 1977 saw a significant change in the programme's production staff and artistic direction: the BBC apologised for the violence of THE DEADLY ASSASSIN, moved the series' transmission time back to after 6 p.m., and installed Graham Williams as the new producer with a brief to tone down those aspects of the show which had been causing controversy for the past three years. Since these were often the very things which had made the serials in question so dramatically powerful, it is in terms of their absence that the conventional account goes on to "explain" late '70s **Doctor Who** - and, presumably, also the disappearance of the public debate on the series' baleful influence on its juvenile audience.

It is *ipso facto* true that a more cautious programme will generate less controversy - just as it is also true that most people tend to get bored with hearing the same argument for years on end. Of course, this applies less to pressure groups like the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association, but it is striking that Mary Whitehouse and her followers paid far less attention to Doctor **Who** after 1977. This is all the more noticeable in that television's harmful effect on children continued to be a live issue with them throughout the late '70s. The Autumn 1979 edition of the NVALA newspaper *The Viewer and Listener*, for example, carried an article attacking the use of occult material in fantasy drama in general, and **The Omega Factor** and **Sapphire and Steel** in particular. The latter series came in for particular criticism for its assault on childhood "innocence": "Another disturbing feature in the series was the linking of children's nursery rhymes with the occult. There is a very real possibility that little children, many of whom are likely to be watching at such an early hour may, in future, subconsciously connect the two in their childish imaginings." It was not simply a toning-down of programme content that turned the Association's attention away from **Doctor Who**, however. The comments on **Sapphire and Steel** quoted here illustrate a recurrent tendency in its members' arguments: amateur psychological speculation is rife. So it's quite a bonus for them when a *real* psychologist backs up their opinions; and this is what happened in 1978 when Dr William Belson published the findings of his research into T*elevision Violence and the Adolescent Boy*, and warned of a link between violent television programmes and juvenile delinquency. For the lay reader, Belson's book is a monumentally tedious work of statistics, but this was the price of respectability in academic circles. His research method was to discuss with adolescent boys a selection of programmes broadcast in the period 1959-71, some of them violent, others not, the latter acting as a control. To refresh the memories of his interviewees, he used "programme guide" cards which contained information about a series on one side, and showed a representative still on the other. The **Doctor Who** card showed the Daleks confronting the Mechanoids in THE CHASE, and the information served to remind boys that the series had started in 1965, and that the Doctor was played by William Hartnell. So perhaps it was fortunate that Belson did not need to be respectable amongst television historians.

The result of the interviews, tabulated statistically, gave an idea of how violent each programme was thought to be. On a

scale of 10, **Doctor Who** measured 5.14, above every other science fiction programme except **Late Night Horror**. However, this violence was not of a harmful kind, Belson decided: the report pronounced that "science fiction violence" (among other types) does not "increase serious violence by boys". As the *Daily Mail* put it, "the monsters of **Doctor Who** don't worry Dr Belson one bit. For their belligerent antics are so far-fetched that boys, no matter how scared, know they have nothing to do with real life."

This may have been (in the words of Graham Williams) an "extremely left-handed compliment", but it was significant in dispensing with the complaints from the Mary Whitehouse stable: her Association set a lot of store by the report's support for the broad case against television, and quietly dropped the **Doctor Who** campaign.

This is not to say that people ceased to question the programme's suitability for children during the late '70s. What is striking about public discussion of **Doctor Who** during this period is the combination of interest and hollowness: it is often treated with a degree of affection - it had yet to acquire the reputation for tacky marginality which dogged its public image during the 1980s - but viewers and journalists have clearly run out of fresh angles. For example, press publicity more often than not ran along photogenic but conventional lines with a string of features on "girls", from "leggy Leela" to Suzanne Danielle. And part of this stock of standardised thinking which the series carried with it was its mid-'70s reputation for violence and horror, nightmares and bedwetting.

One thing which contributed in a small way to the currency of this after-image was the continuing availability of material associated with **Doctor Who**'s horror years. Some of the Hinchcliffe serials had to wait until 1979 to be released as Terrance Dicks novelisations, and as late as 1980 Target Books decided that *The Brain of Morbius* would make ideal reading for very young children, and brought out a specially rewritten version as the second and (unsurprisingly) last of their *Junior Doctor Who* series. Reviewing the offering for *The Times*, Philippa Toomey shudderingly mentioned its "gruesome" plot and "really unlikeable illustrations" before vanishing, "with a wheezing, groaning sound", presumably to the bathroom.

It was more often the current series, however, which attracted such comments from journalists and parents, most of all (oddly enough) during Season 17. In the *Daily Mail*, for example, columnist Lynda Lee Potter wrote of viewers' reactions to the "malevolent green eye bulging amidst swarming facial worms" which faced teatime viewers at the end of the first episode of CITY OF DEATH: "An elderly lady shouted, 'For God's sake turn it off' as a strong man choked on his whisky. A 19-year-old slid moaning to the floor. I groped queasily for the door, and my entranced, unconcerned, nine-year-old son reached out a hand for his fourth egg sandwich." Proof positive for Potter of the BBC's claims that "gentle little children" really do love the programme's "ghoulishness".

A few months later, *The Sun* published a story calculated to whip up a fresh controversy. Headlined "Is This Doctor Who Monster Far Too Scary?', the article told how kids who bumped into the creatures in the studios were terrified, and that the six-year-old daughter of one of the actors had to be carried out crying. Unfortunately no photographs were available to substantiate the claim, and nothing more was heard about the matter from *The Sun* after the Mandrels had made their appearance in NIGHTMARE OF EDEN.

Finally, in February, 1980, a survey on the portrayal of violence and cruelty on television carried out for Independent Television Publications' *TV Times* asked parents which programmes should be banned. Top of the hit-list came **Doctor Who**, though it was named by only 30 of the 500 mothers questioned. The most recently broadcast story was THE HORNS OF NIMON. No doubt **Doctor Who**'s increasingly vocal fan contingent would have declared that the violence and cruelty lay in forcing small children to watch that sort of thing.

REFERENCES

Books

William Belson, *Television Violence and the Adolescent Boy* (1978)

Terrance Dicks, *Junior Dr Who and the Brain of Morbius* (1980)

Newspapers and Periodicals

Autumn 1979: *The Viewer and Listener* (re **Sapphire & Steel)**

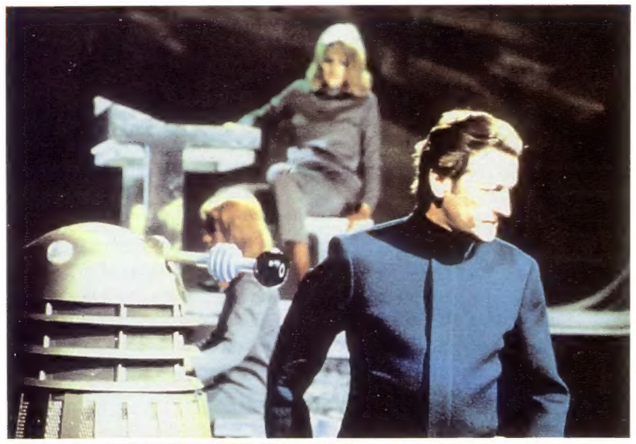
3/10/79: *Daily Mail* (Lynda Lee Potter)

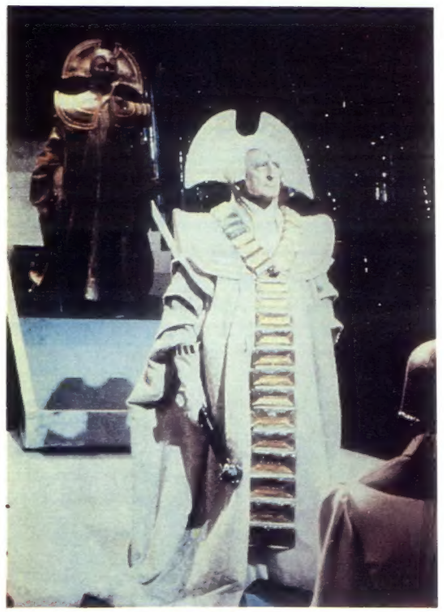
24/11/79: *The Sun* (Scary Mandrels)

Feb 1980 *TV Times*

5/3/80: *The Times* (Philippa Toomey)

Doctor Who in the '70s: Season 7 to Season 17





Adams appeal

The script editor of season 17 explains what he liked about *Doctor Who* - about character, continuity, and comic relief

I HAD always wanted to write for **Doctor Who**. When I was about twelve at prep school I remember writing an episode for us all to do sat around a tape recorder. It was a kind of parody of **Doctor Who** - something to do with Daleks discovering they could be powered by Rice Krispies! I was always a **Doctor Who** fan and I suppose that influenced my own tastes in science-fiction as well as my desire to write it.

Very early on I sent the **Doctor Who** office a synopsis for a story, which was sent back rather curtly with a note saying, "We would like to see rather more evidence of talent than this!" Nevertheless, after my first meeting with Simon Brett, the radio producer, at which I first proposed the idea of doing a science-fiction comedy, I went down to my parents' place in Dorset and spent about six months there writing the pilot script for *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

After I had written that first episode, and while I was waiting for BBC Radio to make up their minds whether or not they wanted to do a series, I sent a copy of it along to Bob Holmes who, at the time, was script editor on **Doctor Who**. He liked it, asked me in for a chat and that's how I got involved with writing THE PIRATE PLANET. That also took a long time before anything happened, but then, all of a sudden, both commissions came through about the same week. Typical, thought I - after long periods of intense inactivity I was suddenly going out of my mind with too much work to do.

I sat down and wrote the first four episodes of *Hitch Hiker* and then, after a very short break, plunged into doing four episodes of THE PIRATE PLANET after which I was in such a state that I had to co-write the last two episodes of *Hitch Hiker* with John Lloyd.

I'm tempted to say paying rent bills was the true inspiration behind THE PIRATE PLANET, but really the concept underwent so many changes between what I originally wrote and what was made that a lot of it was evolutionary. The very first draft centred around a planet that was being mined. The mining machinery should have been turned off but hadn't been, and consequently the whole planet had become totally hollowed out. So my next thought was, "What does one do with a hollow planet?"

Answer: it eats other planets. So that was my basic idea. Graham Williams, on the other hand, wanted to do a programme about space pirates. But just as he felt the pirate idea alone would not sustain interest for ninety minutes, so I felt I would have a hard job relying just on the hollow planet element. So the logical view would seem to be to marry the two concepts together.

Now imagine that this planet the Doctor came to was, a long time ago, the sole source of some mineral which the Time Lords needed. They had been responsible for setting up the operation to mine those bits out of the planet. However, along the way, they had to contend with much insurrection among the local population who were, by and large, a very riotous lot. To pacify them the Time Lords, who were to be shown not always behaving as properly as they ought, decided, purely as a temporary measure, to erect an enormous statue which would actually drain off all the evil and aggression from the planets inhabitants.

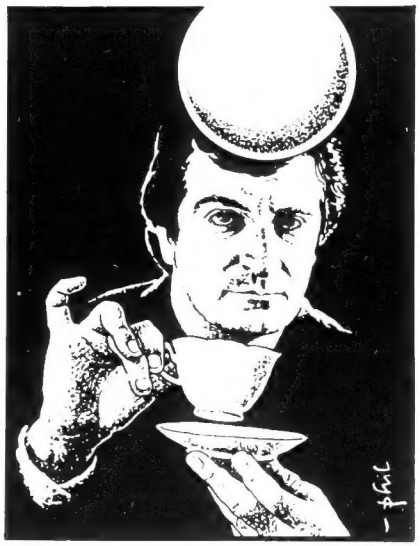
Having done this the Time Lords then despatched a technician whose job it was to shut down the equipment hidden inside the statue. But somehow this Time Lord got caught up in the machinery so that all the stored evil and aggression started draining into him. Gradually over the centuries, while still trapped inside the statue, his mind turned to thoughts of revenge against his people for abandoning him. So he conceived a plan whereby he would let the mining machinery completely hollow out the planet, and then devise a means to make the planet "jump" and surround Gallifrey.

However it was felt the aggression draining plot element was too like THE SUN MAKERS, so it all got changed ultimately into what was probably a better story anyway.

Curiously both *Hitch Hiker* and THE PIRATE PLANET came out just as the *Star Wars* science-fiction boom was really starting to happen in Britain. In fact when *Hitch Hiker* first went out on radio, it was in the same week that Close Encounters opened in the West End. Immediately, of course, everybody started accusing me of jumping on the bandwagon, after I had been fighting to do science fiction for years beforehand. Now, with all that has happened since then, one suddenly feels one is going back into an area where once you felt you had broken new ground, only to discover the place littered with ugly multi-storey car parks and office blocks where previously there had only been virgin territory.

As for how I became **Doctor Who**'s script editor that was all to do with THE PIRATE PLANET. Whilst we were getting the scripts together I think it is fair to say I sent poor Graham off into several epileptic fits because it was turning into such a complicated story, with so many effects and all the things I wanted to do - such as air cars, inertia-less corridors, planets which ate other planets, etc. I recall sitting in the production office, reading out the finished plot synopsis to Tony Read and Graham, and watching Graham sinking lower and lower in his chair. There was a deathly silence when I finished. "Do you like it?" I said, to which Graham replied, "Now I know how Stanley Kubrick felt."

Luckily they were able to do it one way or another, although I was convinced at the time I had caused them so much trouble with these bloody scripts I would be lucky if I ever got any work in television again. However, everybody seemed to like it. I knew Tony was leaving, but it was Graham who suddenly and totally surprised me one night in the bar at Television Centre when he asked me what I would think if I was asked



An ability to command royalty advances upwards of one million pounds per book secures Douglas Adams a reputation as one of Britain's most successful authors of the last twenty years. His books have been translated into many languages, are read world-wide and he is forever revered as creator of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. His one year tenure as Doctor Who's Script-Editor, however, tends to be somewhat less acclaimed. Critics point to the jokey, undergraduate humour of the 1979 season as a nadir in the show's fortunes. Here Douglas Adams defends his perspective on Doctor Who in a talk with Kevin Davies, Gavin French and Paul Mark Tams.

to become script editor.

All in all I was only able to work with Tony Read for about fifteen minutes before the formal handover. We did try to get an overlap period but the BBC would not wear it on the grounds there just was not enough money to justify employing two script editors simultaneously. So apart from a few drinks together that was it. Luckily I did get to know a bit about the job and Tony's way of working through doing THE PIRATE PLANET but it was still like being thrown in at the deep end.

To this day I really don't know why Graham asked me to script edit the series, although I suspect it was on the basis of that first script. That said, it is not a seat that does anybody any good to sit in for too long because it is a very hefty and demanding job. Tony Read did it for eighteen months, which is probably shorter than most people have done it for, but it is such a heavy workload and the pressures are very intense.

I was quite happy to bring back the Daleks because they are such a part of **Doctor Who**. The only problem is that Terry Nation liked to insist on doing the scripts himself rather than licensing another writer. And since Terry is always such a busy person, it was difficult agreeing a date when he could write us a story.

I never really wanted to bring the Master back because I felt it would be disrespectful to the memory of Roger Delgado.

Twenty-six programmes a year is one hell of a lot, considering how technically complicated the whole thing is, and the fact that it has such a ludicrously small budget. It puts a great strain on anybody who works on the show. A good **Doctor Who** script editor as well as being literate, also has to be what you might call "technicate". My degree is Arts-based, but I did get a Grade 1 O-level in physics which has served me in good stead ever since.

If you are sufficiently acquainted with, say, Boyle's Law and other fundamental principles of physics, then all it really needs is a logical imagination to be able to extrapolate from those. The Babel Fish in *Hitch Hiker* is a good example. The Babel Fish occupies only about half a page of script, but behind those few lines lay about three days of logistically mind wrestling to work out why, if this fish is so miraculous, it proves God exists, but because proof denies faith, it *ipso facto* proves he doesn't.

Good scripts work because they have been planned and thought through logically. A good writer gets paid the amount he does not just for what you do see on the page, but also for what you don't see - all the work that is done in the background.

One thing I did sit down and do for the show was a proper format for **Doctor Who**. Before then we were really rather like royalty - with no properly written constitution. It was about the only drama programme on the BBC which didn't have such a document. On a contemporary show like **The Brothers**, for instance, you would have had a list of the characters, their histories, their backgrounds, where the series is to be set, circumstances surrounding the show, etcetera. **Doctor Who** had none of this, so whenever you found new writers you hoped would contribute to the show, all you could do was invite them in for a chat.

Luckily it is almost an instinct writing for **Doctor Who**. You can tell fairly soon if a prospective new writer is going to slot in or not.

I found there is actually very little you can define about the programme or the characters. True you needed to rely on the fan clubs or even the programme files if there were specific continuity aspects to worry about, but otherwise there was no great cross-referenced master guide available anywhere, and as far as I could see there never had been. It was very much a case of making it up as you went along and keeping fingers crossed you didn't conflict or overlap with anything that had been done before.

As a script editor on something like **Doctor Who** the best thing you can do is to aim for a broad consistency. Graham's opinion was that he did not favour over-burdening of writers with sixteen years of history. It would become too restrictive if every script had to rely on something William Hartnell had said back in episode three of the first serial. One of the things you got used to on **Doctor Who** was either receiving reams of letters whenever the Doctor said something inconsistent, or reading ingeniously constructed meanings fans would build up to explain an anomaly.

My attitude was that I favoured using all the conventions that had been established for the programme unless it came to the question: do I junk or keep a good storyline on the basis it conflicts with some fine point of continuity established many years earlier? In such an event, I'm sure viewers would prefer we went with a good story and lost the minor convention.

Humour I have always favoured in **Doctor Who**. I think comedy is a very important part of any drama, but it must never under-cut, always underscore it. If you go back to Shakespeare, who, let's face it, was good at most things as far as writing is concerned my favourite scene is the one in *Macbeth*, just after that most awful murder has been committed and people are banging on the doors, when, suddenly, this awful porter shuffles on for no reason and starts cracking a string of coarse jokes.

Comic relief is a very misunderstood term. If **Doctor Who** ever started to get too many gags in it then that would throw everything out of the window. It works best when it's in tandem with the drama, reinforcing it at certain key moments. The scene with Tom Baker and Bruce Purchase, where the Doctor is tied up in the Captain's trophy room, is one I feel works very well to illustrate that point. It is why Tom is such a good actor. He can go so totally over-the-top in a scene and yet still remain a hundred percent credible - retaining the conviction about what he is doing while carrying both the drama and the humour at the same time. If you play **Doctor Who** for laughs, it doesn't work, but equally, if you took it totally seriously, it wouldn't work either. Tom can do both and it never looks hammy, which is why he was always so good at the part. □

Just seventeen

DAVID OWEN assesses Graham Williams final season as producer, and sees the end of a trend

IF THERE'S one factor that Graham Williams' three seasons as producer of **Doctor Who** share, it's their tendency to start well, and then deteriorate. In terms of pure credibility, the season openers tended to far outshine the stories later on, due either to budgetary limits or script deficiencies. The 1979/80 season is no exception - except this time, despite efforts to hold back writing and financial resources to the end, its tailing off was imposed on it from outside. The result is a season which, miraculously, manages to be *less* than the sum of its parts.

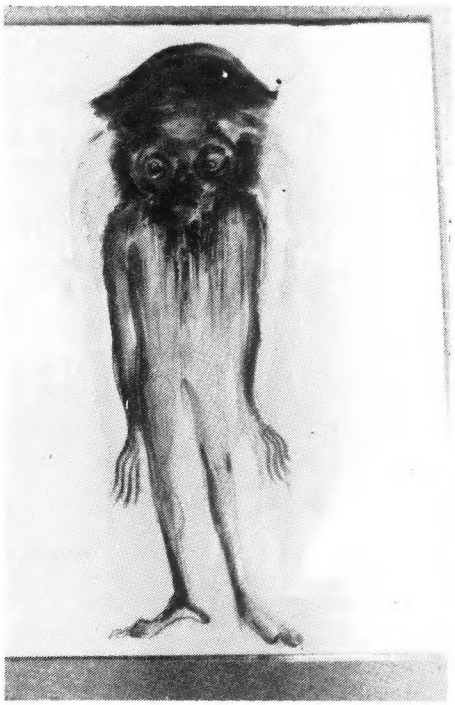
It's less alarming to watch the five stories that were broadcast with the benefit of hindsight. Organised fans of the series expressed at the time a great deal of concern that the level of comedy in the series was endangering its dramatic integrity, and were worried that the leading man was being given too much free reign over his material. Had they known that in years to come, this degree of knowing wit, a deliberately self-conscious nod to the more sophisticated viewer would be rudely knocked out of the series to be replaced by a less stagey but also less self-aware form of presentation, they might have relaxed a little more, and settled back to watch a type of **Doctor Who** flourish that has not been seen since.

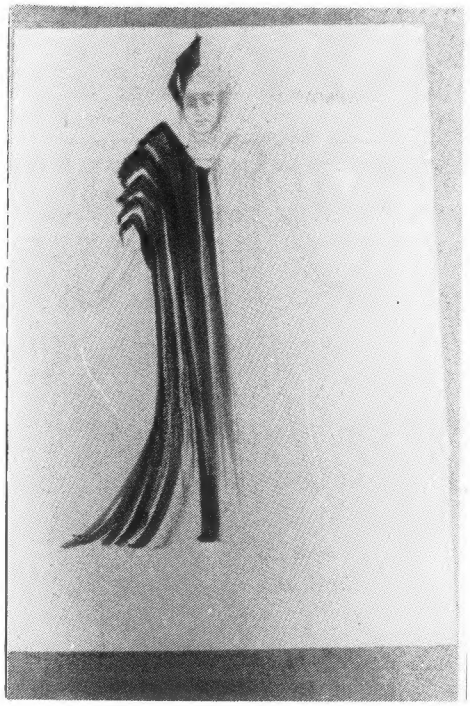
The season is full of self-referencing. Right from DESTINY, in which the Doctor finally admits to the viewers that he knows that the easy way to escape from the Daleks is to belt up the stairs, until HORNS, which not only pays homage to the legend of the Minotaur, but then has the gall to *refer* to it as well. CITY OF DEATH is a story *about* the basic premises of **Doctor Who** - we are given an insight through Duggan's eyes into the basic insanity of a tousled bohemian and a girl who dresses like a schoolgirl but is actually 120 years of age travelling through time in a Police Box with a tin dog for company.

What characterises this season more than any other aspect, is the change in the nature of the relationship between the Doctor and his companion. For the first time ever, they are *equals*. Whilst Mary Tamm's Romana may have at times been the Doctor's purely intellectual equal, the Time Lady's regeneration has bequeathed her an instinctive rapport with the Doctor along with a knowledge of his favourite planet, Earth and all of its customs. It would be frivolous to speculate as to whether romantic developments off-screen between the two leads were solely responsible for this empathic bond between their characters, but the end result certainly redefined the role of "companion" to the Doctor. Whilst Romana was still quite capable of being captured, ransomed, interrogated, all that sort of thing, she was certainly not capable of being as thick as Jo or Leela, or as incapable of penetrating the Doctors moods as Sarah-Jane or Romana mark I. This led, very productively to the introduction of lots of single-story companions - the Tyssans, Duggans, and Chris Parsons of the season.

Perhaps it's in following the Key to Time season, with its built-in synergy that makes this set of stories seem less cohesive, or perhaps its just that they are so disparate in setting. Or maybe it's just the disappointment of not having SHADA to round the season off and lend some kind of equilibrium to it that makes it seem incomplete and unbalanced.

It is appropriate that the script editor for these stories should be one whose fortune would later be made through the printed word. Books and literary references abound throughout the five stories. The Doctor's role as a scientist who solves mysteries through the application of rigorous methodology to the situation





has been displaced by one of a literary figure whose working vocabulary is the contents of all the libraries in the world and who proceeds by comparing his situation to previous fictional ones - applying a rigorous *myth*ology. From Oolon Caluphid's apocryphal cosmology, via Beatrix Potter and *Mountaineering for Beginners* to *The Ancient and Worshipful Law of Gallifrey* there are written tomes aplenty. With a story based around the art world, and another featuring a delightful look at astrology, as well as the aforementioned retelling of Theseus and the Minotaur, the series revels in the world of human creation, the more fanciful the better. It is only the stark science fiction of NIGHTMARE OF EDEN that bucks this trend.

DESTINY is a better-placed season opener than in previous years. It provides a good point for those unfamiliar with the series to reacquaint themselves with its past (the Daleks, Davros, the Doctor), and to become aware of its then current trends (Romana, the Douglas Adams approach). Full of explosions, daylight, Daleks and "beautiful people" it would be more likely to bring Dads and older brothers in from the football grounds than other more cerebral opening stories..

After the final episode of CITY OF DEATH, the series could have been poised for it's strongest hold on the public imagination for years. Those left cold by the mechanistic approach of DESTINY could revel in the most textually lavish story for years. The jewel in the crown of Season 17, it is the clinching proof that this style of self-knowing irreverent television could succeed. Gone is the requirement for an audience's "willing suspension of disbelief". In it's place is an apparent joy in the telling of the story, rather than just in it's content.

As the Autumn of 1879 turned into the Winter and darkness descended on to Saturday teatime, **Doctor Who** abandoned location exteriors and turned instead to the darker locales of Shepard's Bush and Ealing. The last three broadcast stories all featured the more comfortably studio based K-9 more heavily.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT suffers from following CITY. It is a charming and witty story, but just not *as much* as its forerunner. Placing NIGHTMARE OF EDEN before it would have the benefit not only of separating the two, but of separating the season's two "space epics".

NIGHTMARE itself, being full of CSO spaceships, hilarious monsters, corridor chases, preposterous pseudo science, and wacky Germanic professors, is the kind of story that **Doctor Who** fans pretend to hate, and then secretly love. In sheer content matter, it is as much a self-knowing story as any of the five, but lacks the warmth of the others.

And so to THE HORNS OF NIMON. For a story which has become **Doctor Who**'s very own *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, it remains, along with NIGHTMARE, compellingly entertaining. Both make excellent Target novelisations both fuel the prejudice of the cynic watching **Doctor Who** at the end of the late seventies in the post Star Wars space opera boom - that you just can't do science fiction on a television budget. **Doctor Who** has worked in the past by using credible performers and dialogue to outline the unfolding of the incredible. These two stories fall down by attempting to portray it graphically. The final nail in the coffin is the pantomime performances. It's fun - but much more enjoyable fun a decade later, when it's not the ongoing nature of the series !

SHADA, if the available evidence is to be believed, would have redressed the balance. With its blend of sun-dappled Cambridge meadows and cold space vistas, eccentric academics and pantomime monsters, it ironically managed to encapsulate what this series of **Doctor Who** was all about.

The advantage that retrospect bequeaths to the season is that it can be seen as the far point of a trend that had been growing for the previous few years. The hard-hitting realism of the Hinchcliffe era had been rendered impossible by the twin influences of departmental directive and rampant inflation. Had Williams and Adams wanted to make THE DEADLY ASSASSIN or SEEDS OF DOOM, they would not have been allowed to, or been able to afford to. And, one suspects, they would not have wanted to, either. Season 17 is about ideas - as absurd and incredible as possible. Ideas that can never be sustained realistically on film or in a television studio. Ideas that are just so compelling that they can entertain without being realised visually. As an experiment, this is a fascinating year's worth of **Doctor Who**, but would not have continued to work on TV. On radio, or in print, however it would have been ideal, which, considering the script editor's previous and subsequent experience is hardly surprising. □

Season 17 in context

BBC 1 AUTUMN SEASON

Dr Who
Saturday 6.10 BBC1

Dr Who returns to fascinate the young, frighten impressionable adults. With him (for the first time in four years) come Daleks; a new companion, played by Lalla Ward; and a new race of aliens, the Movellans. Everybody knows what a Dalek looks like. What a Movellan looks like is partly the creation of designer June Hudson. ANWER BATI **finds out how her artistic imagination has reacted to this sort of alien challenge.**

Spaced out

Barry Lewis

Movellan in a London street, plainly an alien. Romana and Dr Who wear costumes reflecting their own taste

'Dr Who is a costume designer's dream,' says June Hudson. And she should know, because not only has she designed half the programmes in the new series, she has also worked on everything from *The Onedin Line* to *Blake's Seven* in the past 20 years. It's not simply that *Dr Who* has the great attraction of all science-fiction programmes – freedom for the designer to work from his imagination rather than just having to get period details right – 'though,' she says, 'you have to know the past in order to design the future.' It is also that it is so well organised, so well established.

But that has its problems. A massive, attentive following keeps a close and critical eye on any new monsters you may design, or the slightest change in the clothes of the Doctor or his female companion.

In the new series, Lalla Ward takes over from Mary Tamm as Romana. 'Lalla is very different from Mary,' June Hudson says, 'she's young and girlish, whereas Mary was cool and elegant and remote, so I've designed playful, witty clothes for her. In the first programme I've given her a pink copy, a take-off, of Dr Who's clothes – even with her own long scarf, but made of silk.' In fact, to make the monsters seem more monstrous, Dr Who and Romana ar deliberately made to look the least 'spacey' characters in the programme. Their clothes are kept to a familiar style, usually reflecting the actors' own tastes.

Aliens and monsters present more of a problem – and more of a challenge; and her ideas come from some unusual sources. The Movellans – the Daleks' rivals in the new series – came to her in a dream. 'I did a sketch the next morning, and the director, who has a taste for Cubism, also liked it. He promised me beautiful-looking actors – and that's important because the danger is that you design a shape, not a costume, and then you get a short, fat actor and it looks terrible!' The Movellans had to seem slightly mechanical, and, much though her design had the right look about it, she had no idea what to make the costumes from. 'I wanted something fairly rigid, something like paper sculpture, but I couldn't think of anything with the right qualities. Science-fiction costumes are more often made by prop-makers than dressmakers, and the man who makes many of my costumes suggested that I use quilted, foam-backed nylon – like they use inside cars and in ski clothes. It worked perfectly.'

Designing science-fiction costumes is, she says, 'a matter of using familiar materials or objects in unfamiliar ways', and often, at least in her case, the material itself is the inspiration for the costume. Give her some corrugated plastic, as used in vacuum-cleaner hoses, and she'll make a space suit of it.

But sometimes, she warns, a bright idea can lead to problems – as when a colleague used a plastic sweatsuit (normally a slimming aid) as a cheap costume, and found that he had a fainting actor on his hands.

Although many of June Hudson's costumes result from sheer inspiration, she also systematically investigates likely sources for new ideas. With as many as 50 costumes to design for each *Dr Who* adventure, and a budget that allows no more than £80 to £100 per costume – 'People forget that that includes everything, boots and helmets, the lot' – she has to find suitable ready-made clothes as often as possible. 'I ring up people like the Electricity Board to find out about new safety helmets, and the Atomic Energy people send me details of new radiation-proof suits.' A recent Health and Safety exhibition in Brighton was a treasure-house of new ideas. She only had to see a plastic stick containing fluorescent chemicals – normally used for emergency lighting in mines – and it found its way on to the Movellan costume.

Dressed in a black smock with a gold sash around her waist, white culottes and black tights, she looks like a seasoned inter-stellar traveller herself, and her own clothes reflect her view that science-fiction clothes should be simple and striking – in her designs she tends to keep to black, white, grey and perhaps the occasional dash of red. Apart from the low budget, the biggest problem in designing for *Dr Who*, she says, is that directors and actors are often nervous about new ideas. 'They're apt to cling to familiar shapes and it can often be an uphill job pushing out the barriers of "now".'

None more uphill, it seems, than designing for women. The problem is to be futuristic but feminine without resorting to clichés. 'Actresses think that the only way they can be futuristic is to put on a motor-cycle outfit. What a bore . . . honestly, if I see one more lady in black leather, I'll drop dead!' ●

WHY Dr. WHO'S GIRL BECAME A DROP-OUT

By DICK MAINO

LALLA WARD, who plays Dr. Who's latest assistant, Romana, almost gave up acting a year ago.

"I dropped out and said I'd never act again," she said.

"I was fed up with it all. I just couldn't bear the whole round of going for parts and working with other people.

"I'm a loner, really. I went to France and travelled a lot."

Then her agent men-

Dr. Who (Tom Baker) and Lalla

A cold carry-on for space-age Suzanne

LOVELY Suzanne Danielle expected location work in exotic hot spots when she signed up for four "Dr. Who" episodes.

Instead, she spent several wet and cold days filming in a Dorset quarry.

Said Suzanne, 23,: "The place looked liked nowhere on Earth, which was all right for the story because we are supposed to be on another planet."

Suzanne's exotic space gear and Cleopatra look make her a natural for the leader of The Beautiful People—a tribe who inhabit the quarry-cum-planet. But behind her sultry appearance, she is something of a villain.

Suzanne wore very little for her starring role in the film "Carry On Emmanuelle", but considers the cover-up space costume more sexy. "I've no intention of undressing for films again," she said.

"I think you should leave something to the imagination".

Suzanne will be seen in her new role when "Dr. Who" returns in the autumn.

ALAN GARROTT

Guess Who!

LOOK WHO'S joining Dr. Who — curvy Carry On acress Suzanne Danielle. Suzanne quit a film earlier this year in protest over explicit sex scenes. In Dr. Who she'll play a creature from another planet who turns out to be a baddie. With enemies like this, who needs friends?

IN-VISION

ISSN 0953-3303

Issue 45

First published

August 1993

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Peter Anghelides
Justin Richards

PUBLISHER

Jeremy Bentham

CONTRIBUTORS

Douglas Adams, Paula Bentham, Phil Bevan, Christopher Bidmead, Kevin Davies, Solomon Deede, Gavin French, Andrew Pixley, Martin Proctor, David Owen, Paul Mark Tams, Leonardo da Vinci, Maureen Vellan, Martin Wiggins

FORMAT ©

Justin Richards
Peter Anghelides
June 1986

DOCTOR WHO ©

BBC television
1979, 1993

ORIGINATION

Banbury Pre-Press

COLOUR

Banbury Repro

PRINTERS

Banbury Litho

EDITORIAL

Mill House,
Aspley Court,
Hill Farm,
Nr Hatton,
Warwick
CV35 7EH
United Kingdom

SUBSCRIPTIONS

8 issues for £18 (add £2 for card envelopes)
Jeremy Bentham,
13 Northfield Road,
Borehamwood,
Hertfordshire
WD6 4AE
United Kingdom

THIS
Paris '32
DaVinci